

The investigative efforts of Towns County Sheriff's Office, GBI Region 8, in cooperation with GBI Medical Examiner's Office, has determined through dental records and other means the identity of the human remains found last month in the southern part of the Towns County. The deceased is Herman William Lee, 62, from Asheville, North Carolina. Mr. Lee's next of kin, who resides in Rhode Island, has been notified.

Human remains were discovered on U.S. National Forest land by hunters in a rugged mountain area in the southern part of the county on January 15 of this year. The hunters notified authorities and Towns County Sheriff's Deputies and a Department of Natural Resources Ranger hiked approximately two miles up the mountain to the scene and determined that the remains were in fact human.

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton contacted GBI's Region 8 field office in Cleveland, Ga., to determine the availability of a forensic anthropologist. Sheriff Clinton met with other law enforcement agents at the command post near the scene.

A search of the area over the next two days, which included personnel from the Towns County Sheriff's Office, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Department of Natural Resources, U. S. Forest Service and Towns County Fire Department, found additional evidence. During the overnight hours, deputies remained near the area to secure the scene.

A forensic anthropologist was also on the scene to assist in the search and direct efforts to preserve evidence. Investigators concluded that all available evidence was collected and the scene was released on January 16. The remains were transported to the GBI Medical Examiner's Office, where further investigation revealed no apparent trauma. The exact cause of death could not be determined.

The Towns County Sheriff's Office received a missing person inquiry from Macon County, North Carolina in 2011. Investigators received information on May 14 that Herman William Lee, of an Asheville, North Carolina address might be in Towns County in the area of Enota Campground off Hwy. 180.

This prompted Towns County authorities to begin conducting an extensive search of not only the campground but the National Forest in the area. The search included six agencies along with three individual K9 teams. Agencies included Towns County Sheriff's Office, Towns County Emergency Services, Union County Emergency Services, Clay County Emergency Services, Dawson County Sheriff's Office, and the U.S. Forest Service. After an extensive search, no sign of the missing person was found.

Due to the missing person investigation and information obtained during the search and rescue operation in May of 2011, investigators suspected the remains could be that of Herman William Lee. Towns County Investigators suggested obtaining dental records in an effort to identify the remains.

The Towns County Coroner's Office and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Medical Examiner's Office are currently in the process of returning the remains to family in another state.

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton and his staff would like for the public to remember the family of Mr. Lee in their thoughts and prayers. Sheriff Clinton also wanted to thank all of the local, state and federal public safety personnel and agencies who assisted not only in the original search but also in the recovery of the remains.

The Towns County Sheriff's Office, on behalf of all the public safety personnel, expresses thanks to Enota Campground for allowing the use of their facilities and property as a command post and planning center during both the search and rescue operation and the recovery of the remains. The local chapter of the American Red Cross was also extremely helpful in providing logistical support.